

his keeping. Food would win the war. It was a fair statement. If the war had lasted another year, the American wheat surplus alone could save our Allies from unendurable distress. So the British farmer of the period of the French wars was taught to believe that the liberties of England were in his keeping, as in fact they were. With Napoleon safe in St. Helena the British urban population clamored for cheap food, though cheap food meant agricultural depression. That was the beginning of the Corn Law fight. With the Kaiser uneasily moving about the grounds of his Dutch refuge, our urban population is beginning to revolve the problem of dear flour. There is much murmuring because flour will not be cheaper for another year. But when cheaper flour comes the wheat growing states are bound to suffer under depression. Will they accept it tamely?

The farmers might swallow their losses if everybody else were to do the same. But that is more than is to be expected. The dye manufacturers, for instance: are they going to come out into the open weather of peace time competition? Did they not sink their money in an enterprise necessary to the country's war effort, in an enterprise that will be vital if ever we go to war again, since dyes are explosives at a short remove? Shall we then abandon them to the mercies of German competition? We are not likely to do so; they will get protection even from the Democratic party. How about the merchant marine: shall we leave it to sink or swim, as international competitive conditions dictate? No indeed: we are revolving plans for subsidizing it. The wheat grower will ask, where does my situation differ from that of the dye producer or the merchant marine? Find the difference, if you can.

The British grain grower of the early nineteenth century asked for protection, and got it. That assured him a high level of prices, since England was already an important nation. The American grain grower of today might ask for protection, and easily get it, since he holds the balance of political power throughout the northwest, and as matters stand politically, in the nation at large. But we are an exporting nation and protective duties can not really help the grain grower. Nothing will help him to maintain the present level of prices except the continuance of the federal guaranty. That is a device he might not have thought of, if there had been no war. But now that he has seen its workings, will he be willing to relinquish it? Hardly, if other war industries are to be perpetuated in their prosperity through protection and subsidies. The farmer's moral claim to public bounty is as good as anybody's.

But the wheat grower's subsidy will be an immense drain upon the public treasury, and upon the

consuming public as well. On every bushel consumed the urban laborer will have to pay a dollar more than he would if wheat were unsubsidized. That amounts to twenty-five dollars for the normal family. On every bushel exported the Treasury will be out one dollar. And exports will range between three and four hundred millions of bushels, if we keep production going at the present scale. That is a burden not so very much less than the cost of maintaining the German army before the war.

It is intolerable. Therefore, the idea is absurd. The American farmer will have to readjust himself to peace time conditions, without taking a tax from every mouthful of bread and laying a crushing burden on the Treasury besides. That is what the city dweller thinks. But let us reflect on the matter. The farmer has seen us build up our industries on a protectionistic basis. He sees industry preparing to present fresh claims for more protection. He has paid and paid, never getting anything for himself but the imaginary benefit of duties on agricultural products which we would not import anyway, since we produce a surplus. Oh yes, a duty on wool, chiefly for the benefit of the Rocky Mountain sheep barons and at times a duty on hides for the profit of the packers. The American farmer may be fooled once or twice, but not ad infinitum. He now knows a method by which he can build up his prosperity, at the expense of other classes, as manufactures have been build up at others' expense. Will he try to use it?

If he does, we are in for a corn law fight, not much less bitter than that which raged in England in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. And, as in England of that time, the wheat grower will not surrender his privileges while other interests maintain the privileges. The whole structure of American protectionism will be pulled down before we can dislodge the wheat guaranty, if once it becomes firmly established in our political system.

The Forty-Four Hour Week

LAST May at their convention in Baltimore the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America voted to establish the forty-four hour week in the men's clothing industry. This meant that they were no longer satisfied with the straight eight hour a day six days in the week for which the American Federation of Labor had been contending for more than a generation. Fourteen weeks ago their employers denied their demand. A combined lockout and strike followed. Last week this contest ended in complete victory for the workers. According to the officers of the union, this is the first case in which the forty-four hour week has been established

as the standard throughout an American industry.

This fact in itself is sufficiently noteworthy; but the circumstances surrounding the achievement are even more remarkable. The great majority of the men's clothing makers are recent immigrants, men and women whom the older American unions have sought to exclude from the country for fear that they would lend themselves to the debasement of the "American standard of living." This fear and the resulting prejudice against these immigrant workers is in part responsible for the exclusion of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers from affiliation with the American Federation of Labor. The long strike for the forty-four hour week has been won without either the moral or financial support of the official organized labor movement by an "outlawed" organization of immigrant workers, who have thus forged into a position of leadership in the improvement of working standards. It is not surprising, therefore, that these despised immigrants should celebrate their triumph as a battle won by themselves in behalf of American workers generally. The leading article in their official journal, the *Advance*, rejoices that "our victory means legislation not only for the clothing industry but also for the entire Labor Movement. . . . The official Labor Movement does not recognize our existence, our struggles or our victories. But we send this message to our fellow workers in and out of the official Labor Movement: 'We have organized, built, fought and won single-handed. But we have done all this not for ourselves alone, but for the working class as a whole. Whatever your attitude toward us may be, we know you only as flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood. We have made a glorious beginning. We hope to see you follow our example.'"

To have been excluded from the American Federation of Labor, to have been looked down upon as immigrants and a menace to the living standards of American workmen, and then to have established a new high standard in one of the most important of American industries, is cause for justifiable pride. But to most Americans who share the rather common prejudice against these Jewish workmen their further grounds for rejoicing will seem particularly interesting. Their long struggle for the shorter work period was principally inspired by the conviction that, without the leisure which the forty-four hour week assures, it is impossible for the wage-working masses to cultivate those faculties the intelligent exercise of which is essential to responsible citizenship in a democracy. One frequently hears these immigrant workers sharply criticised because, having come to America to enjoy the advantages guaranteed by our free institutions, they are so aggressive in their expres-

sion of discontent with conditions as they find them in American industry. As a matter of fact, their discontent is not with America, but with Americans who fail to make American ideals their daily guides to conduct in politics and business. Their fault is that they take our professed democratic ideals seriously and literally. Their worship of democracy is ardent; their sense of the responsibilities of democratic citizenship is a vital part of their daily lives. And taking these responsibilities seriously they feel that they cannot permit their work at the machine so to exhaust them that their energy and will for the exercise of intelligent citizenship are destroyed. To them the forty-four hour week "insures to all workers the essential minimum of leisure not only to enjoy life but also to become better workers and better citizens."

At a time when democracy is being subjected to tests of unprecedented severity throughout the world, this attitude toward better citizenship and better workmanship is both inspiring and reassuring. Democracy has too often been interpreted as a release from responsibility rather than as a challenge to new and more exacting responsibilities. As a result its opponents have been able with a certain appearance of truth to charge it with slackness, corruption and inefficiency. One of the favorite claims of the defenders of the old German autocracy was that in every direction their form of government developed a more efficient and responsible citizenship. They charged that the workers in democratic countries were perpetually seeking to evade responsibility, to limit output rather than to foster high standards of production, and that this tendency toward ca'canny and slacking was a fatal weakness of the democratic nations. That they themselves secured efficiency through arbitrary and dictatorial methods at the risk of personal liberty seemed to them unimportant. It was "human nature" to do as little work as possible. The political corruption and industrial inefficiency of the democratic nations marked them for destruction.

To meet the exactions of the war, the democratic nations did, as a matter of fact, have to resort to a measure of arbitrary compulsion to remove limitations on output and to enforce standards of efficient production. The war seems clearly to have demonstrated that the future of democracy depends in no small degree upon the capacity of employers and workers to harmonize democratic ideals of freedom with the voluntary self-discipline essential to efficient production. Whatever the form of government, no modern nation can hope to survive and prosper whose economic and industrial life is shot through with the spirit of slacking and sabotage.

No group of men in America has a keener appreciation of this fact than the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union. They are among the first of the organized labor bodies to cooperate with their more enlightened employers in the development standards of efficient output. No principle has been more strongly emphasized by their leaders than "the right of the employer to efficiency." They have persisted in their demand for the shorter work week not only because of the workers' right to leisure but also because long hours are among the most fruitful cause of inefficient production. The needle trades are notoriously seasonal trades. Workers can count on the average upon hardly more than thirty weeks of employment during the year—from fourteen to twenty weeks of continuous work and an approximately equal amount made up of a day or two a week during the remainder of the year. This irregularity of employment breaks down morale among the workers whose economic security during half of the year is precarious; it destroys the spirit of craftsmanship; it keeps expensive and costly plants idle for an extravagantly large part of the time. The reduction of weekly hours will compel an equalization of employment from season to season; it will compel more scientific methods of accountancy and management; it will reduce unemployment; in every direction it will tend to stimulate productive efficiency.

The initiative in bringing about this important industrial reform was taken by the workers; to them the credit for the achievement is primarily and principally due. But much credit is also due to certain of the leading manufacturers in the men's clothing industry. As on many other occasions, the firm of Hart, Schaffner and Marx of Chicago proved their faith in the processes of industrial democracy by reaching an agreement with the union through quiet and businesslike negotiation. For years this firm has been operating under what is practically a closed-shop agreement with the Amalgamated. They recognize the workers' right to continuous employment, fair wages and decent leisure as the workers recognize the firm's right to efficient service. As the result of their liberal attitude there was no strike in Chicago and no lockout. In the language of the union's official organ, there were "only friendly negotiations. . . . No sensational newspaper stories. No police and no courts of law. No comic opera heroics and no union-baiting lawyers. Just a plain commonsense discussion by fellow human beings representing different parties to the issue, seeking a solution of the problem. Production was continued while the discussion was going on. The workers received their wages regularly, the firm filled its orders uninter-

ruptedly. In due course the forty-four hour week was agreed upon and the workers were so informed."

This action by Hart, Schaffner and Marx meant that similar action throughout the industry was only a matter of time. Their decision was authoritative for the industry because during a period of years they had given a practical demonstration that the spirit of industrial democracy applied in cooperation with a responsible union pays in financial returns, pays in quality of workmanship, pays in terms of good will and human life and in terms of democratic citizenship. As the immigrants who so largely composed the union of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers have forged their way into a position of leadership among American wage-workers, so such firms as Hart, Schaffner and Marx are taking a position of leadership in the practical application of democratic methods and American ideals to the management of American industry. It is entirely possible that to such employers and their immigrant workmen, whose devotion to our American democratic ideals was kindled into living flame by their experience of European autocracies, America may yet be indebted for a rational and peaceful progression through political into industrial democracy. For the leisure for the enjoyment of life which the forty-four hour week does so much to assure is one of the main objectives of the revolutions which are establishing new forms of government in Europe.

The Conference With Russia

A CRUDE, yet usually valid test of the impartiality of an umpire is the universal protests of the contending parties. Judged by this test the action of the Supreme Council in the matter of Russia was entirely impartial, Miliukoff, Sazonoff, and the other representatives of anti-Bolshevik factions, with the Social Revolutionaries the sole exception, want nothing to do with the conference on Princes' Island. Neither does Chicherin appear to accept it eagerly in behalf of the Soviet government.

For the several Russian factions are not interested in a restoration of order at the present time. They are interested in realizing their own particular ambitions; and they can not see how this can be done except through force. The Supreme Council's declarations in effect lay down principles that defeat the purposes of every faction. "They recognize the revolution without reservation and will in no way, and in no circumstances aid or give countenance to any attempt at a counter revolution." But what is the Kolchak, Deni-

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